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VOC FOR IOP/FN  
POLITICAL FEATURE 1-1756  
EDWARD CONLEY/PLAINS

NOVEMBER 2, 1976

ELECTION '76: REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK: THE CARTER CAMPAIGN  
REFLECTIONS

ANNCR:

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN IS OVER AND BOTH CANDIDATES ARE AWAITING THE WILL OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ON THIS ELECTION DAY. V.O.A. CORRESPONDENT EDWARD CONLEY HAS BEEN COVERING THE CAMPAIGN OF DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE JIMMY CARTER FOR THE PAST NINE WEEKS AND HAS THESE REFLECTIONS.

VOICE:

IT BEGAN WITH AN APPEAL FOR SUPPORT FROM THE HISTORIC PORTICO OF FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT'S LITTLE WHITE HOUSE AT WARM SPRINGS, GEORGIA, EARLY IN SEPTEMBER. IT ENDED IN A JAM-PACKED AUDITORIUM IN FLINT, MICHIGAN, ON NOVEMBER, FIRST, JUST A FEW HOURS BEFORE ELECTION DAY. IN BETWEEN, DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE JIMMY CARTER MADE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY-FOUR SPEECHES IN ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE CITIES. HE FLEW EIGHTY-TWO THOUSAND KILOMETERS TO BRING HIS MESSAGE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND THERE WERE MANY MORE KILOMETERS ON THE GROUND IN MOTORCADES.

COVERING JIMMY CARTER HAS BEEN LIKE TRYING TO CATCH A LEAF CAUGHT UP IN A SWIRLING WIND -- NON-STOP CAMPAIGNING, THE CANDIDATE EVER ON THE GO IN HIS BID FOR THE PRESIDENCY. DEPARTURES FROM THE CANDIDATE'S HOME IN PLAINS, GEORGIA, IN THE PRE-DAWN DARKNESS... CAMPAIGN SWINGS THROUGH FOUR OR FIVE STATES EACH WEEK... MOTORCADES BACK TO THE CARTER HOME IN THE PITCH POST-MIDNIGHT HOURS, THEN UP AFTER A FEW HOURS SLEEP TO WATCH THE CANDIDATE, HIMSELF ALERT AND BUSINESSLIKE, VISITING HIS PEANUT WAREHOUSE TO CATCH UP ON THE FAMILY BUSINESS.

"DASHER" WAS THE CODE NAME GIVEN HIM BY HIS SECRET SERVICE AGENTS. "DASHER," HE WAS, BRINGING HIS POPULIST THEME TO THE NATION, LEANING HEAVILY ON HIS CRITICISM OF THE FORD ADMINISTRATION'S HANDLING OF THE ECONOMY AND WHAT HE CALLED THE SPECIAL INTEREST-ORIENTED REPUBLICAN PARTY.

THERE WERE THE NOW WELL-KNOWN HIGH AND LOW POINTS IN THE CARTER CAMPAIGN -- THE GLOW OF VICTORY AFTER PRESIDENT FORD'S EASTERN EUROPE MISTATEMENT IN THE SECOND TELEVISED DEBATE... THE DISMAY AND CONFUSION AFTER MISTER CARTER'S PLAYBOY MAGAZINE INTERVIEW SET HIM BACK SHARPLY IN THE POLLS.

BUT THERE WERE OTHERS -- NOT BIG EVENTS -- WHICH GAVE A PICTURE OF THE MAN AND HIS CAMPAIGN. AN EARLY SEPTEMBER STOP IN SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA, WHERE GOVERNOR CARTER WAS TO GREET WORKERS AT A FACTORY. ADVANCE MEN HAD SCHEDULED HIM AT THE SITE TOO EARLY. THERE WAS A GLINT OF ANGER IN GOVERNOR CARTER'S EYES AS HE ASKED HIS AIDES: "WHAT DO WE DO NOW?" WITH NO ANSWER FORTHCOMING, THE CANDIDATE TOOK CHARGE. HE FLASHED HIS FAMOUS BROAD SMILE AND INVITED A SMALL GROUP OF ONLOOKERS TO COME OVER AND SAY HELLO. THERE WAS THE MEETING WITH RAILROAD WORKERS IN CALIFORNIA THE DAY BEFORE THE ELECTION. "GOD BLESS YOU, GOVERNOR CARTER," SHOUTED ONE WORKER -- "HE HAS, HE HAS," RESPONDED THE DEEPLY RELIGIOUS CANDIDATE.

FOR THE PRESS, THERE WERE SPECTACULAR AND HUMOUROUS MOMENTS -- THE HUGE TORCH-LIGHT PARADE IN CHICAGO THAT RAISED THE EYEBROWS OF THE MOST JADED REPORTERS BECAUSE OF ITS EXCITEMENT...TRIP TO A MAJOR STOCK CAR RACING EVENT AND THE PRESS AIDE'S WARNING: "YOU ALL HAVE THIRTY SECONDS TO RUN ACROSS THE TRACK BEFORE THE RACE STARTS, AND ONCE THOSE DRIVERS START ROLLING, THEY ARE NOT

GOING TO STOP." REPORTERS IMMEDIATELY TURNED INTO OLYMPIC-TYPE SPLINTERS.

NOW, IT'S OVER -- TIRING WORK, DIFFICULT WORK, TRYING TO REMAIN ALOOF AND OBJECTIVE WHILE COVERING THE CANDIDATE A LITTLE MORE THAN TWO MONTHS.

REMEMBERED ARE MISTER CARTER'S STANDARD STUMP SPEECH, ALMOST WORD-FOR-WORD, AND HIS CATCH PHRASES: "RIGHT-ON," AND "GOOD DEAL." REMEMBERED IS THE MAN RUNNING FOR WHAT HE CALLED THE MOST IMPORTANT ELECTIVE OFFICE IN THE WORLD, WALKING BRISKLY TO OR FROM HIS CHARTERED AIRCRAFT, HIS GARMENT BAG SLUNG OVER HIS SHOULDER, HIS BRIEFCASE IN HIS HANDS.

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